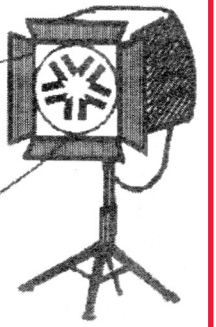




DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA OFFICE ON AGING

Spotlight On Aging



VOLUME XIX, ISSUE 6

A newsletter for D.C. Seniors

June 2004

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE



By E. Veronica Pace

A great time was had by all at the 40th Annual Senior Citizens' Day. I have received great reviews from seniors who enjoyed themselves and were happy to tell us about it.

We truly focused on "Aging Well, Living Well" by having all of the health and wellness exhibits to the event. The manicures, massages and facials were also a special treat. Look at the great photos we have in this issue from the event and you will see a lot of smiling faces.

Repairs for your home can often leave you, the homeowner, in a fix. Read important information on how to avoid being a victim of fraud when contracting for repairs to your home. This is the time when a repairman might come knocking: Be prepared before you answer.

An outstanding woman of talent, beauty and public service, Ms. Senior D.C. 2003 Ellen Odellas Van Edwards will relinquish her crown. This month a new senior lady will be crowned and represent the District's older Washingtonians. Be there to see the great competition as the contestants demonstrate they are aging with style. Inside this issue, see where you can call to purchase your ticket today.

Celebrate the men in your life during National Men's Health Week, June 14-20. Men's Health Week is held to bring awareness to preventable health problems and encourage early detection and treatment of disease in men and boys. Call your lead agency today to find out what they have planned to focus on men's health in D.C. If you don't know who leads services in your ward, call 202-724-5626 for more information.

Happy Father's Day!

ATTENTION Homeowners

Home renovation financing is available through the DC Department of Housing and Community Development's Senior Citizens Home Improvement & Repair Program (SCHIRP). If you are a homeowner in the District of Columbia and your home needs repairs, but you don't have the money, call **Housing Counseling Services, Inc.** (202) 667-7006.

Ms. Senior D.C. Pageant

Witness the selection of Ms. Senior D.C. 2004 as District women 60 years of age and older compete for the title. The Ms. Senior D.C. Pageant will be held June 27, 2004 at 2 p.m. at the University of the District of Columbia, Main Auditorium, Building 46, 4200 Connecticut Avenue, N.W.

The contestants will be judged on a personal interview, philosophy of life, talent and evening wear. The winner will be crowned by Ms. Senior D.C. 2003 Ellen Odellas Van Edwards.

Ms. Senior D.C. 2004 will represent the District of Columbia in the Ms. Senior America Pageant among other national representatives. Tickets for the pageant are \$12. Call 202-289-1510, ext. 170/171 for more information. Refreshments will be served and free parking is available.



Ms. Senior D.C. 2003 Ellen Odellas Van Edwards

Beware Home Improvement Fraud

So, you know that your driveway (or roof, or chimney...) needs work. It's just been too hard or overwhelming to try to find someone to do the job.

Then it looks like your luck has turned around. A nice-looking, clean, young man comes to your door and offers to help you out. He's been working in the neighborhood and noticed that you need some work done. Or, he happens to have some materials left over from a similar job down the street. Or, he wants to use your home as a demonstration project.

Thank goodness, your problem is solved. Or is it?

Spring is the season for home improvement fraud. Home improvement fraud is consistently one of the top complaints that government consumer protection agencies receive from consumers. Having work done on your home is difficult under the best of circumstances.

Consumers who are victimized by home improvements can lose money, suffer serious damage to their homes, or sometimes even lose their homes through a financing scam.

Warning signs

Stay one step ahead of con artists. Here are some common red flags that can alert you that someone may be planning to rip you off.

Look out if the contractor:

- solicits door-to-door;
- pressures you for an immediate decision;
- only accepts cash payments;

- offers you discounts for finding other customers;
- just happens to have materials left over from a previous job;
- asks you to get the required building permits;
- does not list a business number in the local telephone directory;
- tells you your job will be a "demonstration";
- offers exceptionally long guarantees;
- asks you to pay for the entire job up-front;
- suggests that you borrow money from a lender the contractor knows. If you're not careful, you could lose your home through a home improvement loan scam.

Trust yourself. If you're feeling uncomfortable about what the contractor is saying or doing, walk away from the deal.

Do your homework

All contractors who do work in the District of Columbia must be licensed by the Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs ("DCRA"). Call 202-442-4311 (then press option "one") to find out if your contractor is licensed. If he is, it does not necessarily mean that you won't have problems. But at least you'll know that he has insurance.

If he is not licensed, you should think twice before using him.

Ask for the names and addresses of other people in your neighborhood who have had similar work done by that contractor. Talk to those people. Ask if you can come to see

See **HOME IMPROVEMENT FRAUD** page 32



GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

ANTHONY A. WILLIAMS, MAYOR

D.C. OFFICE ON AGING NEWSLETTER

Senior Day 2004

Aging Well, Shooting Hoops Well



Aging Well, Putting Well

Aging Well, Serving Well



Aging Well, Saluting our Troops Well



Aging Well, Looking Well

Aging Well, Leading Well



D.C. OFFICE ON AGING NEWSLETTER

“Aging Well, Living Well”

**Aging Well,
Learning to
Quilt Well**



Aging Well, Leading Well



Aging Well, Sliding Well

**Aging Well,
Relaxing Well**



**Aging Well,
Seeing Well**



Aging Well, Exercising Well



D.C. OFFICE ON AGING NEWSLETTER

Community Calendar

June events

4th • 10:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

The EOFULA Spanish Senior Center will be visiting the American National History museum. Come and join in this wonderful day's event and meet new friends while learning about our country. 1842 Calvert St., N.W. For more information, call 202-483-5800.

11th • 10 a.m.

The Washington Seniors Wellness Center, 3001 Alabama Ave., S.E., will host a health seminar during Men's Health Week (June 13-19). Special guests: De Lisa Winston, R.ph, Grubbs Pharmacy-Division of Diabetes, Diabetes and Men's Health, National Institute of Health's "9 a day fruit & vegetable Men's Program." Contact Evelyn Minor at 202-529-8701.

19th • 9 a.m. to 10 p.m.

Come and join in the fun! Barney Neighborhood House Senior Program will sponsor a trip to Atlantic City Resort Casino. Cost: \$35. Bus will leave from 504 Kennedy St., N.W. No money will be collected the day of the trip; no refunds or reserved seats. Money is due May 28th. For more information, contact Emily Hill at 202-939-9020 or Juanita Benthall at 202-939-9043.

23rd • 11 a.m.

DC Parks and Recreation is sponsoring a scenic boat ride on the Potomac River. Join them on the renowned *Spirit of Washington* cruise ship. Tickets are \$25 each. Call 202-282-0748 for tickets and details of trip.

27th • 2 p.m.

Witness the selection of Ms. Senior D.C. 2004 as women 60 years of age and older compete for the title in the Main Auditorium of the University of the District of Columbia, 4200 Connecticut Ave., N.W. Building 46. The

Office on Aging, the D.C. Senior America Cameo Club and Family and Child Washington, D.C. Inc. will present the Ms. Senior D.C. Pageant 2004. Contestants will compete in a personal interview, philosophy of life, talent and evening gown competition. The winner will represent the District of Columbia in the Ms. Senior America Pageant. Refreshments will be served and there is free parking available, donation \$12. For tickets call, 202-289-1510 ex. 170/171.

Ongoing

Seniors wanted for Call-N-Ride program. If you are interested in enrolling in the Call-N-Ride program and you are a resident of Ward 2 or 5, please call Ms. Hooks at the Greater Washington Urban League, Inc., Division of Aging and Health Services. The Call-N-Ride program is a discounted taxicab service offered to seniors 60 years and older.

Mondays and Wednesdays

- Alternate times Mon. 9:50 a.m.;
Wed. 1 p.m.

Get Fit with Vanessa! Vanessa Williams-Harvin, Fitness Coordinator will conduct Low Impact aerobics and Pilate classes for seniors at the Washington Seniors Wellness Center. The center is at 3001 Alabama Ave., S.E. For more information call 202-581-9355. A physician's statment is needed for participation.

Mondays and Wednesdays

- 1 to 2 p.m.

Computer classes for seniors will be given by the EOFULA Spanish Senior Center. Keep up with technology and learn the basics of the computer. For details call Alberto, 202-483-5800.

You have three days to cancel the contract if you signed it in your home and didn't first talk about the work in the contractor's office. You must cancel in writing. Your contract should contain a notice about this right, and an address where you can send your cancellation.

What to do if you have problems

You should start by trying to work out your problem directly with the contractor. Put your complaint in writing and explain exactly what you would like the contractor to do, and what you are willing to do.

If you do not think the work has been done properly and would like an inspector from DCRA to come and examine the work, call 202-442-4613. If they find a problem, they may fine the contractor and/or issue a "stop work" order.

If you need help in resolving your problem, there are several places to complain.

If you want someone to help you mediate a resolution to your problem, you can turn to either the Multi Door program in the D.C. Superior Court, or the Better Business Bureau:

Multi-Door Dispute Resolution Program • 202-879-1549

District of Columbia Superior Court
500 Indiana Avenue, NW, Room 1235, Washington, DC 20001

Better Business Bureau • 202-393-8000

Metro Washington, DC and Eastern PA
1411 K Street, NW, Suite 1000, Washington, DC 20005
Fax: (202) 393-1198 • Email: info@dc.bbb.org • www.mybbb.org

If you want to report a deceptive practice, contact:

Office of the Corporation Counsel • 202-442-9828

Government of the District of Columbia
441 Fourth Street, NW, Suite 450 North, Washington, DC 20001
Fax: (202) 727-6546 • Email: consumercomplaint@dc.gov
www.occ.dc.gov

**Tune in to
"Senior Talk"
with Doris Thomas,
June 19, 5 p.m.,
WOL 1450 AM.
To call in, dial
1-800-450-7876.**

Are you a primary caregiver?

The D.C. Office on Aging and DC Parks and Recreation Would like YOU to spend a **GRAND week on the Potomac at the United Generations Caregivers' Vacation Camp Camp Riverview in Scotland, Maryland August 2 - August 6**

You must be:

at least 60 years old and a District resident, the primary caregiver of a child 8 -18 years of age, and be the child's relative by blood or marriage.

The camp offers caregivers of children the opportunity to enjoy a week away from the city at Camp Riverview, with the option of bringing the children along. While attending the same camp, children will have their own separate activities.

For more information, contact DC Parks and Recreation at 202-282-0748.

Home Improvement Fraud from page 29

the work that was done.

Ask those former customers:

- whether the job was completed on time;
- whether the contractor kept to his estimates;
- if they were comfortable with the workers who did the job;
- whether the workers cleaned up (*each day and at the end of the job*);
- how the work has held up.

The contract

Under District of Columbia law, you should have a written contract with your contractor. Even if it's a small job, you and the contractor should put the agreement in writing. Make sure that your agreement:

- has no blank spaces;
 - has the name, address, phone number, and license number for the home improvement contractor;
 - includes a start date and a completion date (*even if you have to estimate these*);
 - describes the terms of payment:
- 1) You should not make the final payment until after the completion of the work.
 - 2) Try to negotiate to pay no more than one third of the total amount up front.
 - 3) Make payments linked to work done, rather than dates.
- is specific about materials - including color, model, size, brand name, and product;
 - includes any oral agreements. (*You can write these in yourself - don't be shy. Just make sure that both you and the contractor put your initials by the changes.*)

If you want to report a licensing violation, contact:

Department of Consumer and • 202-442-4400 Regulatory Affairs

941 North Capitol Street, NE, Washington, DC 20002
TDD/TTY: (202) 442-8940 • www.dccra.dc.gov

If all else fails, you may want to sue. You can bring a case in small claims court if the amount you are seeking is less than \$5000. You don't need a lawyer to do this.

H. Carl Moultrie I Courthouse • 202-879-1120

409 E Street NW, Building B, Room 210, Washington, DC 20001
Recording: 202-879-1037

For more consumer education advice, go to www.occ.dc.gov, and click on the consumer protection and antitrust Web page.

SPOTLIGHT ON AGING

Spotlight On Aging is published by the Information Office of the D.C. Office on Aging for D.C. senior residents.

Advertising contained in the Senior Beacon is not endorsed by the D.C. Office on Aging or by the publisher.

441 4th St., N.W., 9th Floor, Washington, D.C. 20001
202-724-5622 • www.dcoa.dc.gov

E. Veronica Pace, **Executive Director**
Darlene Nowlin, **Editor**

Wendy Weinberg, **Contributing Writer**
Adrian R. Reed, **Photographer**

The D.C. Office on Aging does not discriminate against anyone based on actual or perceived: race, color, religion, national origin, sex, age, marital status, personal appearance, sexual orientation, familial status, family responsibilities, matriculation, political affiliation, disability, source of income, and place of residence or business.

Sexual harassment is a form of sex discrimination which is prohibited by the Act. In addition, harassment based on any of the above protected categories is prohibited by the Act. Discrimination in violation of the Act will not be tolerated. Violators will be subjected to disciplinary action.

The Office on Aging is in partnership with the District of Columbia Recycling Program.